

SPREAD THE WORD

**Marketing Self-Management Education
Through Ambassador Outreach**

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Population Health



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Arthritis Program has developed *Spread the Word: Marketing Self Management Education Through Ambassador Outreach* to help increase enrollment in self-management education workshops by word-of-mouth recommendations. This guide was designed to help organizations that offer workshops to implement Ambassador Outreach in their communities.

All materials in this guide are available on the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions/marketing-support/ambassador-outreach.

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CDC research has shown that many people, including those with arthritis, do not know that self-management education workshops exist in their communities. They also prefer to learn from people like themselves who have experienced and benefitted from self-management education workshops. The goal of the Ambassador Outreach Strategy is to increase participation in these workshops by using community-based Ambassadors to promote the workshops and create interest through word of mouth.

This guide gives step-by-step instructions and guidance to Coordinators on how to find and train Ambassadors. It also gives Ambassadors ideas and tools for marketing self-management education workshops.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Population Health
Arthritis Program





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INTRODUCTION

People who have different chronic health conditions may face common problems, including high costs in both economic and human terms. In 2005, 133 million Americans—almost one out of every two adults—had at least one chronic illness.¹ People may have more than one chronic condition—for example, 52% of people with diabetes and 57% of people with heart disease also have arthritis.^{2,3}

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Arthritis Program has identified several effective, evidence-based, and low-cost interventions that can reduce arthritis symptoms and improve quality of life.^{4,5} Many of these interventions may also be appropriate for people with other chronic conditions.

Although these interventions are available through state health departments and other organizations across the United States, participation is low. Research has shown that most people do not know that classes are available in their communities to teach them about chronic disease self-management.⁵

CDC has developed the Ambassador Outreach Strategy to increase participation in self-management education workshops by using community members who serve as “Ambassadors” to promote the workshops and generate interest through word of mouth. The goal of this guide is to provide the guidance and tools to implement this strategy.

The Ambassador Outreach Strategy and this guide are patterned on CDC's *1-2-3 Approach to Provider Outreach: Marketing Arthritis Interventions to Primary Care Practices*.⁶ The purpose of the *1-2-3 Approach* was to give health care providers information on why and how to recommend self-management classes to their patients. The Ambassador Outreach Strategy is focused primarily on teaching and supporting Ambassadors, who are successful graduates of self-management education classes, to recruit participants directly.

The guide will help Coordinators and their staff members

- Develop and implement a Coordinator's Work Plan.
- Recruit and train two types of Ambassadors—Person-to-Person Ambassadors and Spokesperson Ambassadors—to market self-management education workshops like the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP).
- Prepare Handbooks for your Person-to-Person and Spokesperson Ambassadors that include customized tools and marketing materials.
- Manage and evaluate Ambassador activities.

WHY CHRONIC DISEASE SELF-MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

The current health care system in the United States responds well to immediate medical needs such as accidents, severe injuries, and sudden bouts of illness. However, the health care system is not designed well for managing the needs of people with chronic health conditions. In 2009, the U.S. Surgeon General recognized the importance of community-based self-management education programs in helping people with chronic health conditions, citing the CDSMP as a key example.⁷

CDC's Arthritis Program recommends self-management education programs, including both the CDSMP and the more disease-specific Arthritis Self-Management Program (ASMP), because they have been shown to help people with arthritis and other chronic conditions. These programs are designed to help people with chronic diseases develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to manage their conditions and continue to pursue the activities that are important to them.

Meta-analyses of the CDSMP and the ASMP demonstrate consistent and persistent improvements in self-efficacy; psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, or distress over health; and lack of aerobic exercise, fatigue, and social-role limitation.⁸

WHY AMBASSADOR OUTREACH?

Many studies have shown the benefits of participating in self-management education workshops.^{8,9} However, only a small percentage of people with chronic diseases actually participate in these types of interventions. For example, about 11% of people with arthritis report attending an arthritis education program.¹⁰ Audience research, including focus groups and surveys, among people with arthritis has shown that most people, at least those with arthritis, do not know that self-management education workshops exist. This research has also shown that most people find out about available interventions through word of mouth from friends and family.

The findings from this research inspired a grassroots approach, the Ambassador Outreach Strategy, which uses community-based Ambassadors to promote self-management education workshops.⁵ Ambassador Outreach is a systematic way to spread the word about workshops available in the community by building on word-of-mouth communication. It involves identifying, recruiting, training, and providing ongoing support for a network of Ambassadors.

Person-to-Person Ambassadors are trained to have one-on-one conversations with potential workshop participants. Spokesperson Ambassadors are trained to make brief presentations to community groups. Ambassadors also may talk with influential members of the community—doctors, spiritual leaders, members of community groups—who are in a position to recommend workshops to others.



TIP

Word-of-mouth marketing depends on people talking to people. The credibility of the message depends on the credibility of the messenger.

MARKETING SELF-MANAGEMENT EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

This guide is intended to help Ambassadors market or “sell” the value of participating in a self-management education workshop. Grassroots marketing, also known as *word-of-mouth* and *buzz* marketing, is a focused approach to educating members of the community about a specific product or idea. This guide uses the marketing term *pitch* to describe a compelling message on the benefits of participating in self-management education workshops. CDC research suggests that grassroots marketing can be effective in increasing awareness of the benefits of participating in self-management education.⁵

WHAT IS AN AMBASSADOR?

Audience research suggests that the most effective messenger is a person that someone knows or a person who has a chronic condition and has benefitted from participating in self-management education workshops. Ambassadors are messengers from the community who can generate buzz about self-management education workshops. They represent the “voice of experience” and are likely to be living with chronic conditions and to have completed a self-management education workshop successfully. They can endorse and recommend self-management education and provide up-to-date information on how to attend a workshop.

Person-to-Person Ambassadors use individual relationships and conversations with friends, family members, and others, while Spokesperson Ambassadors share their experiences with groups of people and encourage them to enroll in workshops.

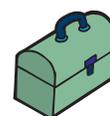
HOW TO USE THE AMBASSADOR OUTREACH GUIDE

Although this guide, *Spread the Word: Marketing Self-Management Education Through Ambassador Outreach*, is designed to market the CDSMP, it can be used to market the ASMP or other self-management education workshops as well. In addition to tools for marketing the CDSMP, some materials that apply specifically to the ASMP are provided.

All tools are available online at www.cdc.gov/arthritis/interventions/marketing-support/ambassador-outreach in PDF, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint formats that can be downloaded and customized for each Ambassador or promotional activity. In addition, tips and tools are designated by icons throughout the guide and handbooks to highlight supplemental information.



TIP: An idea that could help shape your Ambassador Outreach efforts.



TOOL: Handouts and templates to help you market self-management education workshops.



LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: Ideas or comments from other Coordinators based on their experience.

This guide includes three main sections that are designed to meet the needs of Coordinators, Person-to-Person Ambassadors, and Spokesperson Ambassadors:

- **Coordinator’s Guide.** This guide is for the staff members of the programs responsible for marketing and recruiting participants into CDSMP workshops. It includes information and tools for planning, implementing, and evaluating Ambassador Outreach efforts.
- **Person-to-Person Ambassador Handbook.** This handbook is designed to provide customized tools for Person-to-Person Ambassadors who market self-management education workshops to individuals.
- **Spokesperson Ambassador Handbook.** This handbook is for Spokesperson Ambassadors who work with groups of people to encourage participation in CDSMP workshops.

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